

BOTRYTIS BLIGHT OF GERANIUM

J. W. Miller

Geraniums, *Pelargonium* spp., are perennial herbs which are widely grown as indoor and outdoor plants. Geraniums are subject to a blight caused by *Botrytis cinerea* Pers. ex. Fr., which is most severe in the greenhouse under conditions of crowding, high humidity, and frequent watering (2).

SYMPTOMS. Blossoms, leaves, and stem cuttings are attacked by the fungus. Blossom blight is characterized by premature fading and drying of the petals, which turn dark at the margins and wilt. Usually the central florets are the first to become infected. Under high moisture conditions, the florets are matted together, and gray, powdery masses of spores are produced (Fig. 1A). Leaf lesions may be initiated by spores or infected petals which drop on the leaves. The lesions are irregular, brown, and water-soaked, becoming dry, wrinkled and in many instances covered with fungus spores (Fig. 1B). Spores may be present on cuttings taken from the infected plants, resulting in a rot of the cuttings in propagation beds (1).



Fig. 1. Botrytis blight of geranium: A) blossom blight phase; B) leaf spot phase.

CONTROL. Sanitation and cultural practices can greatly reduce losses due to this disease. Cuttings should be selected from disease-free plants and grown in sterilized soil. Adequate spacing, good ventilation, and careful watering practices to keep the foliage and flowers dry are essential. Infected plant parts should be removed promptly (1). Should a disease outbreak occur, any one of the following fungicides is suggested: $\frac{1}{2}$ lb Benlate 50% WP/100 gal water; $\frac{3}{4}$ lb Botran 75% WP/100 gal water; $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb Daconil 75% WP/100 gal water; 2 lb Captan 50% WP/100 gal water; or 2 lb Dithane M-45 80% WP or Manzate 200 80% WP/100 gal water. Termil, a form of Daconil, used as a thermal dust, is also effective in the greenhouse.

Literature Cited

1. Forsberg, J. L. 1963. Diseases of ornamental plants. U. Illinois, Coll. Agr. Special Publication No. 3. p. 77-78.
2. Pirone, P. P. 1970. Diseases and pests of ornamental plants. 4th ed. The Ronald Press Co., New York. p. 381-382.